

Department of State – US Embassy - Kabul

Program Office:	Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan
Funding Opportunity Title:	Afghan Diplomat Training Program
Announcement Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number:	SCAKAB-12-AW-017-SCA-07262012
Deadline for Applications:	August 17, 2012
CFDA	19.501 - Public Diplomacy Programs for Afghanistan and Pakistan

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, announces a limited source competition for a grant to provide training to young Afghan diplomats in Washington, D.C. These diplomats recently carried out a similar program in Beijing sponsored by the Chinese government. Overall authority for this cooperative program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is “to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations... and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world.” The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact:

Cynthia Rafferty, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: e-mail: KabulPDProposals@state.gov or
Merrie Blocker, Afghanistan/Pakistan Program Coordinator, Department of State, Washington, DC, at e-mail: BlockerMD2@state.gov

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan announces a limited source solicitation of an assistance award through this Request for Proposal (RFP) for a grant to implement a two-week training program in the U.S. for 10-15 Afghan diplomats (henceforth “the participants”) to take place in November 2012. The program will be the second phase of a joint training program for Afghan diplomats. The first phase was sponsored by the Government of China and took place in Beijing in May. The budget available for the U.S. program will cover logistical and personnel costs, including international travel, per diem (lodging, meals, and incidental expenses), local U.S. transport and resource materials for the participants, U.S. consultant fees and other administrative expenses.

The goal of this program is to support the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan in building the capacity of its staff, thereby enhancing its professionalism and ability to work cooperatively and effectively with the U.S. government and other countries, as well as NGOs, media houses, universities and research centers, businesses, and religious institutions that operate in the South and Central Asia region.

To this end, ten to fifteen Afghan diplomats will participate in a two-week diplomacy training program in the U.S., centered in Washington, D.C., but possibly including some days in a second U.S. city. Since this is part of a cooperative effort between the U.S. and China to build capacity in the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a visit to the Chinese Embassy in Washington should be built into the program and Chinese diplomats should be invited to the opening and/or final sessions.

A successful proposal from the applicant will implement this program using an orientation and training approach focusing on diplomatic knowledge and practical skills so that, at the end of the program, the participants will have greater knowledge of the following:

- Formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy including the role of stakeholders
- within (Congress) and outside of government (NGOs, media houses, universities, research centers, businesses, religious institutions),
- U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and South and Central Asia, U.S.-Chinese relations, and the New Silk Road Initiative,
- Economic statecraft,
- Strategic planning, budgeting and resource allocation,
- Role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy, including freedom of religion,

and a practiced ability in:

- Approaches to bilateral and multilateral negotiations,
- Styles of public engagement including speaking and using social media,
- Interaction with local, regional and international media.

The program schedule should also include participation in a social service activity alongside American volunteers.

The program format will consist of presentations, discussions, practical exercises and role-plays at a conference-style facility in the Washington, D.C. area suitable for a group of this size and offering space for concurrent, small group activities. Competitive proposals will emphasize the development of the skills professional diplomats must master in their careers. Also included in the program will be site visits to the Department of State and other U.S. government agencies, the Embassies of Afghanistan and China, and other foreign policy stakeholders. The social service activity should take place during the program week. Cultural and social events on certain weekday evenings and the weekend between the two training weeks are desirable supplements.

II. BACKGROUND

Afghan Diplomat Training Program, 2012 (Chinese government funded)
[AfghanDiplomatTraining BeijingSchedule.pdf](#) (this document is also attached to the email cover of this RFP.)

The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section in Kabul (PAS Kabul), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and the Chinese Embassy in Kabul, has already selected the young diplomats to participate in the programs.

This program does not require cost sharing.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

This is a Limited Source Solicitation.

Eligibility is open to U.S. non-profit organizations, including higher education universities, with direct and successful experience implementing similar, recent programs to bring Afghan and/or other diplomats to the U.S. for short-term training. The applicant is not required to include funding or in-kind contributions from other sources.

IV. SCOPE OF AWARD

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy Kabul and the award recipient would agree to participate jointly in this training program. Each party would have specific obligations and responsibilities under the terms of the Cooperative Agreement. These obligations and responsibilities are outlined below:

The recipient shall provide the following support:

- Design and implement the diplomat training program.
- Provide all work plans and schedules to U.S. Embassy Kabul and the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Office of Press and Public Diplomacy (SCA/PPD) for approval.
- Provide copies of curricula outlines and teaching materials developed to U.S. Embassy Kabul.
- Manage all funds granted.
- Coordinate logistical arrangements for all program travelers to the U.S., such as scheduling and purchasing airfare, airport pick-up and drop-off, lodging and meals, health insurance and medical treatment and the disbursement of program funds.
- Provide health/accident insurance for all Afghans visiting the U.S. under this program. Provide certification of health insurance for each Afghan traveler at least three months before travel date so that the certification is available for the pre-visa interview documentation process.
- Assemble and submit to U.S. Embassy Kabul quarterly and final, programmatic and financial reports.
- Maintain regular contact with U.S. Embassy Kabul and the Office of Press and Public Diplomacy of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA/PPD) at the State Dept. in Washington, D.C. about overall program administration. Keep both the Embassy and SCA/PPD fully and currently informed about how the program and operations are administered, any problems or deficiencies, and the necessity for, and progress of, corrective action.

The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section shall provide the following support:

- Approve all work plans and schedules.
- Provide the names and resumes of all Afghan participants in the program.
- Provide program guidance and input as appropriate.
- Coordinate issuance of DS -2019 forms with the State Department in Washington, D.C.
- Assist all Afghan visitors in the U.S. visa process.
- Conduct pre departure briefings.

The Office of Press and Public Diplomacy of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs of the Department of State, Washington, D.C. will monitor the program, including site visits.

V. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 3 months

Award Amount: The award ceiling is set at \$250,000.

Application Submission Process: Applications must be submitted electronically using Grants.gov or to emdelage@state.gov. Proposals submitted to the emdelage@state.gov must include the Funding Opportunity Number and Title in the subject line. Thorough instructions on the Grants.gov application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.

For questions about this solicitation, contact:

Cynthia Rafferty, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: e-mail: KabulPDProposals@state.gov, or
Merrie Blocker, Afghanistan/Pakistan Program Coordinator, Department of State, Washington, DC, at e-mail: BlockerMD2@state.gov

Application Deadline: The application must be submitted on or before **August 17, 2012, 11:59 p.m. Eastern (U.S.) time**. Begin the application process early, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline.

All applicants must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register: (1) Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711; (2) Register with Central Contractor Registry (CCR); (3) Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (4) Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your CCR registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your CCR registration may prohibit submission of an application through Grants.gov.

Application Content: The applicant must follow the RFP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. The applicant must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as required by this RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

The complete proposal package must include the following:

1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424) (attached to this communication)

2 – Proposal Narrative

Proposals may not exceed 10 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 3 below.

a) **Abstract:** The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the project to be undertaken, expected timeline, and cost.

b) **Implementation Plan:**

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project. The steps involved from the development of the training curriculum to implementation -- should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. This section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

c) **Organizational Capability:**

The application must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with training in the U.S. of foreign diplomats from Afghanistan and other countries. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project.

3 - Appendices:

The proposal submission must include the following two appendices. Only these appendices, described below in "Award Selection Criteria," may be included as part of the application:

- 1) Budget: Spreadsheet and budget narrative
- 2) Resumes

VI. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

The application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of Department of State and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFP.

- **Project Goals/Implementation Plan (40 points):** The applicant should describe what it proposes to do and how it will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and the applicant should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the

stated need for monitoring and evaluation, relevance of the goals and objectives, and feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion.

- **Organizational Capability (40 points):** The proposal should demonstrate the ability to develop and produce a successful diplomatic training experience for the participants. The applicant must demonstrate how its resources, capabilities, and experience will enable it to achieve the stated goals and objectives and be able to provide independent evaluation on past performance in Afghanistan. In addition, the applicant should describe how and with whom it will collaborate to meet project goals.
- **Appendices (20 points):**
 1. **Budget:** The budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget submission must include a detailed 1-page spreadsheet, as well as a budget narrative to provide any useful clarification of budget items. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by OMB Circular A-122, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative. The applicant is also advised that as per OMB Circular A 133 that a financial audit is required for any organization awarded \$500,000 or more in one year.
 2. **Resume:** A resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume. The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director, in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile transmission.

Anticipated Time to Award: The applicant should expect to be notified if its proposal has been approved for award within 30 days after the submission deadline. PAS Kabul will provide information at the point of notification about any modification to the proposal or plan of work that will be required to finalize the cooperative agreement.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. Government, nor does it commit the U.S. Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. Government reserves the right to reject the proposal received.

Reporting Requirements: The Recipient is required to submit programmatic and financial reports within 90 days after the close of the project period.

VIII. DISCLAIMER

If the proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.